

Fund-Raising Basics



- What are we as a board going to do if the money allotted by our local funding source is reduced considerably?
- Are we “shooting ourselves in the foot” if we’re too successful in acquiring outside funding to help our library?
- How can we as board members be both responsible for the budget and ask for more money from the community and from others?
- How can Friends groups or Library Foundations fit into this financial puzzle?
- How do we go about locating grant opportunities that public libraries can apply for?

For some libraries, there is often not enough tax-generated money available for more than just basic library services. Each trustee, especially on a governing board, is responsible for the monies that are appropriated for the library’s budget but also any additional monies that are donated to the library. But the reality of the fiscal situation faced by each library must be addressed squarely for a library to be successful in providing for its community. So where does that leave trustees who are trying to provide the best possible library services for their communities? Here are some approaches used by library staff and trustees to address shortfalls in providing good library services:

- **Approaching their primary funding source to explore additional, sometimes discretionary, sources of revenue** – such as **windfall profits taxes**, lottery proceeds, etc.
- **Emphasizing that a community needs to provide adequate resources for at least good, basic library services for the community** – and viewing additional resources as ways of providing “enhanced” services. This distinction is sometimes handy in order to emphasize to local funding sources that the majority of responsibility for a local public library is from local sources.
- **Passing a bond issue for “big ticket” items such as new library construction** – Before proposing a bond, an analysis of the community should be done to try to decipher how likely it is to pass.
- **Working to establish a more stable source of funding for those enhanced services the board wants to provide** – such as an endowment fund from which only the interest is used.
- **Requesting that the city council or village board establish a “sinking fund” to set aside money for replacement of large capital items** (e.g., building renovation, computer equipment) Such funds can continue to accumulate money over a period of years so that when such costs need to be made, it is not such a “hit” all at once.
- **Establishing a Library Foundation for “big ticket” items (e.g., library construction) and to provide a means for citizens to support the library with larger donations, by means of bequests, gifts of stock, and other longer-term means.** This again has the added benefit of increasing the visibility of the library

in the community by showing how valuable givers feel the library has been in their lives and the lives of their families.

- **Seeking grants to help enhance the support of your special programming and services through of a variety of entities** such as foundations and the Nebraska Library Commission. See also Trustee Fact Sheet on Grant Writing.

******Chat for Continuing Education Credits******

Questions to discuss at a regular Library Board meeting about Fund-Raising and related activities (Each board member participating can earn 1 hour of continuing education credits for Board Certification):

- How can we as a board show support of the library's budget before the local funding source(s)? How do we go about better communicating the value of library services and programs to local authorities and community members?
- What are some of the special services, projects, and/or programs that we want to seek grant funding for?
- What fund-raising ideas can we as board members share from experiences from other organizations? How can we adapt those ideas?

This gives me a good start but where else can I look for additional information?

(Please note that all books are available for request by library staff and/or library trustees from the Nebraska Library Commission. Some regional library system office libraries might also have some of the sources available too.)

- *Big Book of Library Grant Money*, by American Library Association. 2007.
- *Nebraska Foundation Directory* by Junior League of Omaha.
- *Promoting and Marketing the Library*, rev. ed., by Benedict A Leerburger. G. K. Hall & Company. 1989. [See Chapter 5, "Fund-Raising"]
- *Trustees, Friends and Staff: Your Library's Three-Legged Stool Can Help You Get More Money!* By Ellen Miller. NLA/NEMA Pre-Conference, October 17, 2001.
- *Winning Library Referenda Campaigns*, by Richard B. Hall, Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc. 1995
- Don't forget to contact your **local regional library system office** or the **Nebraska Library Commission** for additional information. Check this website for regional library systems contact information:
<http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/system/> or contact Richard Miller, Library Development Director via email: richard.miller@nebraska.gov phone: 1-800-307-2665; 402-471-2045 at the Commission.

This Trustee Fact Sheet Series was developed in response to the feedback from you and other local public library trustees in the 2004 Nebraska Public Library Trustee Survey completed in cooperation with Nebraska Library Commission, Regional Library Systems, and Nebraska Library Association. Updated 12/16/2010.